

ARTICLE APPEARED
ON PAGE A-8

WASHINGTON POST
2 March 1984

State Department Refuses U.S. Visa For Soviet Olympic Games Official

By Jay Mathews
and John M. Goshko
Washington Post Staff Writers

LOS ANGELES, March 1—The State Department, without explanation, today rejected official accreditation for the Soviet Union Olympic Committee attache just as he was to arrive here to begin making arrangements for Soviet athletes at the Summer Games.

Peter Ueberroth, president of the Los Angeles Olympic Organizing Committee, immediately protested the State Department's delay in ruling against a visa for Oleg Yermishkin, who was to arrive today, and said the committee would seek an explanation for the decision and its timing.

A spokesman said the State Department would have no comment until Friday on the decision to deny accreditation to Yermishkin, who accompanied a Soviet Olympic delegation to Los Angeles in November and December. It is understood that federal officials concluded that Yermishkin may have a background in Soviet intelligence that makes him unacceptable.

"We do not dispute the decision, so much as the length of time that it

took to reach the decision," Ueberroth said in a statement. He said he is "deeply troubled" by the timing of the decision, which he called "inefficient and unfortunate."

Olympic organizing committee spokesman Amy Quinn said the committee had sought accreditation for Yermishkin in early December, after signing a protocol accord with the Soviets promising to do what it could to clear the way for his planned arrival today. She said she assumed that, since Yermishkin had not received the necessary papers, he was still in the Soviet Union.

There was no immediate reaction from Soviet Olympic officials, who have occasionally expressed displeasure with arrangements in Los Angeles and have yet to guarantee that they will not retaliate against the U.S. boycott of the 1980 Summer Games in Moscow by boycotting this summer's Games, which begin July 28.

Olympics officials here seemed less worried by the possibility of adverse Soviet reaction to the incident than by the potential for more trouble with State Department red tape.

Ueberroth said he sent a telex today to Marat Gramov, president of the Soviet National Olympic Com-

mittee, advising him of the State Department action and asking that someone be named to replace Yermishkin. It was understood that the State Department would be ready to accredit a substitute, assuming his background is not similar to that of Yermishkin.

Ueberroth said he told Gramov "we are making every effort to insure that these matters are expedited in a more efficient manner in the future." In a separate statement, he said, "The timing is critical because of the short time remaining—about 20 weeks—until the 1984 Olympic Games begin."

The FBI has often objected to Soviet intelligence officials being included in official delegations visiting the United States, while State Department officials have argued that the potential harm from including such officials is not worth the trouble of keeping them out.

Ueberroth was recently quoted as saying there is "always a chance" of a Soviet boycott of the 1984 Games, but a recent Soviet agreement on television rights to the spectacle convinced many here that the Soviet athletes will come.

Staff researcher Katharine MacDonald contributed to this report.